

**Before the  
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of )  
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Accessible Emergency Information, and Apparatus ) MB Docket No. 12-107  
Requirements for Emergency Information and )  
Video Description; Implementation of the Twenty- )  
First Century Communications and Video )  
Accessibility Act of 2010 )

**COMMENTS OF MEDIA GENERAL, INC.<sup>1</sup>**

**I. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY**

Media General owns and operates broadcast television stations in 48 markets and is one of the nation’s largest connected-screen media companies. With award-winning newsgathering, Media General stations pride themselves in delivering critical information to all viewers – including individuals with disabilities -- before, during, and after emergencies.

Media General applauds the Commission for the practical approach it took in extending the Audible Crawl deadline until November 30, 2015, and it urges the agency to view the questions posed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> FNPRM through the same lens. *First*, school closings should not be a required element of audible crawls. *Second*, to the extent technical solutions exist that allow for prioritization, the Commission should rely upon the good faith judgment of broadcasters regarding the priority of audible crawls.

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<sup>1</sup> Media General, Inc. (“Media General”) hereby submits comments in response to the Commission’s Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in the above-captioned proceeding. *See Accessible Emergency Information, and Apparatus Requirements for Emergency Information and Video Description*, Second Report and Order and Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, FCC 15-56 (rel. May 28, 2015) (“2<sup>nd</sup> R&O” and “2<sup>nd</sup> FNPRM”).

## II. REAL-WORLD IMPLEMENTATION DICTATES THAT THE SCHOOL CLOSING REQUIREMENT BE ELIMINATED

Media General stations are the preeminent providers of local news and information in their markets. For example, the Radio Television Digital News Association recently honored WSLN-TV (Roanoke, Va.) with a national Edward R. Murrow Award and 11 other Media General stations with 22 regional Murrow Awards.<sup>2</sup> The company also further bolstered its newsgathering efforts in May, opening its Washington D.C. bureau to provide breaking news, political updates and analysis, and in-depth investigative reporting.<sup>3</sup> Media General stations provide programming responsive to community needs, and we support numerous non-profit organizations, programs and events that help make the communities we serve better, stronger, and more vibrant places to live, work, and do business.

Simply put, Media General stations are local news leaders – before, during and after emergencies. With that in mind, Media General asks that the same common-sense rationale employed in the *Audible Crawl Waiver Order* continue to inform the Commission’s decision making in the instant 2<sup>nd</sup> FNPRM. In that Order, the agency recognized that Text-to-Speech (“TTS”) crawl generators “were not developed and brought to market in time for broadcasters to test and implement” these technical solutions by the prior deadline.<sup>4</sup> Acknowledging “technical

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<sup>2</sup> *Media General’s WSLN-TV Wins National Edward R. Murrow Award* (June 26, 2015), available at [http://mediageneral.com/press/2015/june26\\_15.html](http://mediageneral.com/press/2015/june26_15.html).

<sup>3</sup> *Media General Announces New Washington, D.C. Bureau and Names Jim Osman as Bureau Chief* (May 18, 2015), available at [http://mediageneral.com/press/2015/may18\\_15.html](http://mediageneral.com/press/2015/may18_15.html)

<sup>4</sup> *Accessible Emergency Information, Petitions for Waiver*, Memorandum Opinion and Order, DA 15-632, ¶ 16 (2015).

difficulties associated with implementation” and “timelines beyond [broadcasters’] control,” the Commission extended the Audible Crawl rule effective date to November 30, 2015.<sup>5</sup>

Similar technical implementation difficulties and analogous practical realities dictate that the Commission should eliminate the requirement to include school closings in audible crawls. Media General agrees with NAB that the “very large number of schools that report closings will crowd out more important emergency information” as well as other audio programming, such as video description and Spanish-language programming, on the secondary audio stream.<sup>6</sup> For instance, WPRI-TV in Providence has 1,499 schools in its database -- and 3,191 total entities when you count government, community, religious, and health organizations -- with the potential to close during a major storm or other emergency. Even with an aggressive estimate of three seconds per school closing on the audible crawl, it would take 1 hour and 15 minutes to read the entire list – and two and a half hours to read it twice. And the large number of schools isn’t limited to stations in the more densely-populated Northeast. WSPA-TV and WYCW in the Carolinas include 480 schools in their database with the potential for disrupted schedules. The bottom line is that running an audible crawl for this number of closings would effectively turn the secondary audio stream into the “school closing stream,” especially when considering that standard operating procedure for many Media General stations is to allow school closings to run continuously throughout all non-newscast programming during the day.

Additionally, a list of school closings is of a much different character than the “critical details” of emergency information, such as evacuation routes for an incoming hurricane or the path of a tornado. Whereas viewers rely upon Media General stations for continuously updated

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<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> Reply Comments of NAB, MB Docket Nos. 12-107, 11-43, at 4 (Apr. 20, 2015).

information during these situations, school closing information is available from other sources, most notably the school itself through text and email alerts.

The technical difficulties with current TTS technology compound the problem. As it stands, there are numerous ways an hours-long audible crawl could reset and start over long before it finishes, such as (1) breaking into the school closings audible crawl to verbalize more important emergency information; (2) updating the text crawl with updated closing information; (3) commercial breaks; and (4) other technical glitches. Thus, not only would the audible crawl wipe out the secondary audio stream for much of the day, it would likely repeat information about the schools at the beginning of the alphabet without ever reaching the end of the list.

In sum, Media General agrees with NAB that the school closing aspect of the audible crawl rule “serves no real utility,” but we remain committed to working with NAB and other stakeholders “regarding alternative solutions [that] will more effectively achieve the Commission’s goals.”<sup>7</sup>

### **III. AUDIBLE CRAWL PRIORIZATION SHOULD BE LEFT TO THE NEWS JUDGMENT OF BROADCASTERS**

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> FNRPM, the Commission asks whether it should codify prioritization rules for situations where broadcasters utilize more than one crawl at a time. Providing critical emergency information to viewers is an intricate process that involves many moving parts, including newsroom personnel, reporters in the field, directors in the control room, graphics operators, and technical engineers, among others. Media General stations and their news teams are best able to make decisions about the content of their newscasts, including the content and prioritization of information in their audible crawls. Flexibility and autonomy for broadcasters in

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<sup>7</sup> Petition for Temporary Partial Exemption and Limited Waiver of the National Association of Broadcasters, MB Docket No. 12-107, at 11 (Mar. 27, 2015).

these situations is paramount. The scope of information that stations provide during real-life emergencies past and future is fluent, dynamic and not fit for shoehorning into a static prioritization scheme. Media General stations have decades of journalistic experience, and there is no doubt that the “fact-specific judgments” of broadcasters made on “a case-by-case basis” should be relied upon in situations of multiple visual crawls.<sup>8</sup> Assuming technology exists and has been brought to market that allows for prioritization, broadcasters should decide the priority of audible crawls.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Media General appreciates the Commission’s willingness to reconsider its prior decisions regarding the inclusion of school closings in the audible crawl. Real-world evidence demonstrates that school closings should be eliminated as emergency information for purposes of the audible crawl rule. In addition, to the extent a station utilizes multiple visual crawls of emergency information in non-newscast programming, prioritization of information on the secondary audio stream should be left to the fact-specific judgment of broadcasters.

Respectfully Submitted,

**Media General, Inc.**

By: \_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
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Dated: August 7, 2015

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<sup>8</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> FNPRM, at ¶ 41.